



Town of Arlington, MA Redevelopment Board

Agenda & Meeting Notice July 24, 2023

Per Board Rules and Regulations, public comments will be accepted during the public comment periods designated on the agenda. Written comments may be provided by email to cricker@town.arlington.ma.us by Monday, July 24, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. The Board requests that correspondence that includes visual information should be provided by Friday, July 21, 2023 at 12:00 p.m.

The Arlington Redevelopment Board will meet Monday, July 24, 2023 at 7:30 PM in the **Arlington Community Center, Main Hall, 27 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476**

1. Review Meeting Minutes

7:30 pm Board will review and vote to approve meeting minutes for 2/27/2023, 4/3/2023 and 6/26/2023.

2. MBTA Communities Discussion

7:40 pm Board will hold a working session with the MBTA Communities Working Group.

3. Open Forum

8:40 pm Except in unusual circumstances, any matter presented for consideration of the Board shall neither be acted upon, nor a decision made the night of the presentation. There is a three-minute time limit to present a concern or request.

4. New Business

9:15 pm

5. Adjourn

9:30 pm Estimated



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Review Meeting Minutes

Summary:

7:30 pm Board will review and vote to approve meeting minutes for 2/27/2023, 4/3/2023 and 6/26/2023.

ATTACHMENTS:

Type	File Name	Description
Reference Material	02272023_DRAFT_AMENDED_Minutes_Arlington_Redevelopment_Board.pdf	2/27/23 meeting minutes
Reference Material	04032023_DRAFT_AMENDED_Minutes_Arlington_Redevelopment_Board.pdf	4/3/23 meeting minutes
Reference Material	06262023_DRAFT_AMENDED_Minutes_Arlington_Redevelopment_Board.pdf	6/26 meeting minutes

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, February 27, 2023, at 7:30 PM
Community Center, Main Hall
27 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Rachel Zsembery (Chair), Eugene Benson, Kin Lau, Stephen Revilak

STAFF: Kelly Lynema, Assistant Director, Planning and Community Development

The Chair called the meeting of the Board to order.

The Chair opened with **Agenda Item 1 – Continued Public Hearing: Docket #3650, 190 & 192-200 Massachusetts Avenue.**

Ms. Lynema updated the Board on the latest developments with the public hearing applicants. The applicant has responded to each of the issues raised by the Board at the previous meeting. They are exceeding the required bicycle parking and have brought some of it up to ground level. They've provided two potential measures for satisfying the requirements of the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan. They want to retain a little bit of flexibility, because they are not yet sure who the tenants of the ground floor commercial space will be, or what their transportation needs will be. They plan to work with the DPCD for administrative review of the final TDM plan. The applicant held at least two meetings with abutters in advance of this hearing.

The Chair invited Attorney Robert Annese to address the Board. Attorney Annese reported that they sent letters to some of the abutters directly impacted by their proposal and had a couple of meetings with abutters.

Mr. Lau thanked the applicant for removing the arch and the tandem parking spacing. He felt that the building looked dark and heavy and requested that the applicants lighten up the color of some of the materials. The applicant responded that the majority of the color is a lighter gray with a darker gray accent, and that the lighter gray color reflects daylight well. Mr. Kin said that the rendering of the back of the building looks much lighter than the rendering of the front of the building. The Board already has a sample of the darker material and requested to see a sample of the lighter material as well.

Mr. Lau pointed out that the solar panels in the rendering are very close to the edge of the roof, which would impact the placement of roofing equipment. When roofing equipment is within 10 feet of the edge of the roof, guardrails of at least 42 or 46 inches in height are mandated by OSHA. He does not want guardrails on the roof, so would like the solar panels to be placed so as to accommodate roofing equipment that is not within 10 feet of the edge of the roof. The applicant responded that he saw no reason they couldn't do that. Mr. Lau asked if they would still meet the requirements for the square footage of the solar panels. The applicant said that they would.

Mr. Lau asked that the unit on the top floor be reversed so that the bedroom not be in the corner. The corner is the highlight of the building as seen from the street, and bedrooms are generally dark. If the rooms are reversed, as on the lower floors, then the effect is a more lively, well-lit corner. The applicant replied that he could make that change.

Mr. Benson asked if it was possible to add a bumper to separate the bicycle storage in the basement from the driveway and car parking to minimize the possibility of damage to bicycles. The applicant said that the bicycle parking will be enclosed with a steel mesh cage.

Mr. Benson said that the drawings show that a portion of the basement ceiling height is 6'7". The applicant replied that the goal is for the minimum height to be 7'. Because they don't have structural drawings yet, it's difficult to know exactly what the clearances will be. He said that the area marked as 6'7" will probably get higher, but as is, it is still adequate for most vehicles.

Mr. Benson pointed out that the parking summary on C102 is incorrect. The minimum required for apartment buildings is one space per unit, which works out to 36 required residential spaces for this property. The applicant is using an older set of numbers from before the bylaw was changed, and has a minimum of 44.7 parking spaces listed. He also said that it is possible to waive the six required commercial parking spaces with a TDM plan, and they can also reduce the residential spaces required, but adding three additional bicycle spaces would not constitute a sufficient TDM. At the previous meeting, Mr. Revilak had asked the applicant to decouple parking and apartment rent, to which they agreed. Mr. Benson said that he is not convinced that doing so generally decreases demand for parking, so he does not think that doing so justifies reducing the number of required parking spaces. The applicant needs the Board to approve a reduction of four spaces, and Mr. Benson said that one way to do so would be to add one affordable unit. Under the bylaw, adding an affordable unit gives a 10% reduction in required parking spaces.

Mr. Benson asked what stackable bike racks are. The applicant responded that each bicycle has a bracket that the rider has to lift it to. Mr. Benson said that the rule is that, unless the Board approves otherwise, bicycle parking cannot require a bike to be lifted off the ground without physical assistance. He proposed a rack that automatically moves the bike into the position rather than having someone need to lift the bicycle.

Mr. Benson said that one shade tree is required for every 25 linear feet of frontage. He thinks that at least one more shade tree is required on Chandler. The applicant responded that they could add another tree. Mr. Benson said that there should be at least two or three trees on Lake Street, but the applicant said that it's not possible to fit them in. The alternative is that the applicant can make a payment to the Arlington Tree Fund. There are enough trees along Mass Ave.

Mr. Benson asked the applicant how they calculated gross floor area. The applicant replied that GFA (gross floor area) is calculated from outside wall to outside wall, with everything included. Area of residence is calculated from inside wall to inside wall, including the actual living space.

Mr. Benson asked how they calculated the two types of open space. The applicant said they have 722 square feet of landscaped open space; other areas are 26 square feet. The patio area is usable but not landscaped open space. Mr. Benson asked the dimensions of the patio, and the applicant responded that it is 14 feet by 31.5 feet.

The Chair asked if Mr. Benson is in agreement with the categorization of the rear of the building as a side yard and not a rear yard. They agreed to discuss it later.

Mr. Revilak noted that the dimensional sheet listed the property as larger than 20,000 square feet, but the lot size is actually smaller than that. Development of a property larger than 20,000 square feet requires a minimum of 600 square feet of lot per dwelling unit, but because the property is actually smaller, that requirement does not affect this development.

Mr. Revilak stated that mechanical assistance for the bike racks is possible and noted that the manufacturer of the bike racks does have a model that provides mechanical assistance. Mr. Revilak asked if the applicant would be comfortable installing such bike racks, and the applicant replied that they would.

Mr. Revilak liked the removal of the tandem parking space, which created space for the bike parking and a little extra depth to the retail space.

The Chair also said that she appreciated the attention the applicant paid to how to repurpose the area when the tandem parking was removed. She also appreciated that they looked at the parapet height and the articulation of the brick around the sides. She liked the dynamic nature of some of the front and side facades, but she felt that the rear facade feels flat. She recommended introducing balconies. The applicant said that based on a meeting with an abutter, they agreed to add to carry the brick one section over, which the Chair appreciated.

The Chair asked if they did any photometric calculations about the spread of the light beyond the building and/or in the unenclosed parking area. The applicant replied that the sconces are downward-facing lights, as well as low-intensity LED lights for safety in the rear. The Chair asked if the lighting in the parking area would be on all the time or would be motion-activated, and the applicant replied that the lights will be on all the time at a low intensity. She requested data with the output per fixture and the number of fixtures.

The Chair said that she liked the way that the applicant identified the signage canopy for the Mass Ave side of the building, but she thought that the signage on the Lake Street side should be more prominent. She encouraged the applicant to look at a blade sign. The applicant said that would project into the public way. She also pointed out that the rules would only allow one sign on the façade.

Mr. Lau asked about access to the garden shown on the fourth floor outside the residential units. The applicant replied that access was through the roof. Mr. Lau asked for clarification that the purpose of the garden is to be visible from the street, not for the tenants to have access to, and the applicant confirmed that that is the case.

Mr. Lau asked whether there would be a horn or strobe to alert pedestrians when cars are exiting the garage on the Chandler Street. The applicant replied that there's plenty of room and good visibility, so a warning is not necessary.

Mr. Lau asked where the exhaust louvers to vent the exhaust fumes from the enclosed garage are. The applicant said that there is extensive area to work with on the side with for exhaust, cooling, condensers, etc. Mr. Lau asked how that lines up with the building behind. The applicants replied that the building is relatively far away and would not be impacted.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment.

Rachel Roth, 16 Chandler Street – She expressed concern about the fact that many fewer members of the public attend the Board's meetings when they are in person as compared to when they were online. She encouraged the Board to consider making the meetings hybrid so as to enable more resident participation. She is an abutter but said that the applicant had not reached out to her. She thinks that the whole street will have questions about the scope of construction. She would appreciate a noise study to provide more information to nearby residents. She would also like more information about the process of demolition and construction and how it will affect nearby houses. She would also like the applicant to consider soliciting information from the local residents about what sort of business they would like to see in the retail space.

Peter Ferguson, 16 Chandler Street – He would like the applicant to put more effort into reaching out to the abutters. He also has questions about demolition and construction and is concerned about having a lot of construction and earth removal vehicles on narrow, one-way streets. He would like the Town to give the applicant a variance so that their construction vehicles can enter the site from Mass Ave, rather than having to go onto Chandler, which would reduce the impact on the neighborhood.

Steve Moore, Piedmont Street – The plans refer a protection detail for one tree on Mass Ave, but he cannot find a tree protection detail in the plans. He's concerned about how the tree will survive the work done all around it. He would suggest adding irrigation to the trees in front of the building. Street trees in a busy area typically don't survive without a lot of care, especially water, and hand-watering will probably not be sufficient.

The Chair closed public comment. She requested that the applicant reach out to a wider radius of abutters, that they provide further information on the demolition and construction plan, and that they prove a tree protection detail.

Mr. Benson asked that the applicant include electric charging stations in the garage, and they replied that they are already planning six stations.

Mr. Benson and Mr. Revilak listed several items for the Board to discuss:

- Whether there is a rear or side yard.
- The site set-backs.
- The importance of a loading zone on Chandler Street so as to avoid illegal parking in the bus lane on Mass Ave.
- The five proposed parking spaces for compact cars.
- The parking reduction request, including the possibility of requiring one additional affordable unit.
- The proposed open space, which is more than currently exists but less than was requested.
- What the tree payment should be for the lack of trees on Lake Street.

On the issue of the setback and rear versus side yard: The Board discussed the fact that the zoning bylaws are unclear as to how to define rear yards versus side yards for a property facing three streets. Mr. Benson suggested that perhaps the

Board should introduce a warrant to a future Town Meeting to amend the bylaws. However, the Board currently has the authority to adjust required setbacks, so they can still make a decision. Mr. Benson said that the setback as proposed by the applicant is appropriate because the proposed building is no closer to the neighboring buildings than the current building, and the applicant has made the appropriate effort to screen and landscape the buffer. Mr. Revilak agreed that the setbacks as proposed are appropriate. Mr. Lau and the Chair agreed as well.

On the issue of five parking spaces for compact cars: The Board members all have no problem with the spaces as proposed.

On the issue of the step-back: Mr. Benson said that he thinks that the 7.5 feet step-back needs to be from the building façade, not the lot line, but he will go with the majority. The other three Board members all read the step-back requirement as referring to the lot line, which means that the proposal is compliant.

On the issue of usable open space: The applicant is providing more usable open space than currently exists and is looking for relief from the full amount required in the bylaws. The Chair said that she appreciates that the usable open space in this project is actually very usable, including trees and green roof elements that the Board has requested. She felt that these elements fit with the intention of the open space requirement. Mr. Revilak said that in terms of the standards in Section 3.4.4, the proposal does a good job of meeting them. Mr. Lau agreed with Mr. Revilak's assessment and said that he is willing to give the applicant relief on the open space requirement. Mr. Benson said that he is also willing to allow the relief both because the current property has so little open space and because the proposed open space is quite usable, with good landscaping.

On the issue of parking reduction: The Chair noted that the applicant has provided the beginning of a TDM plan and has requested to work through that further with the DPCD as a condition of the permit. If the applicant takes up Mr. Benson's earlier suggestion of adding an additional affordable unit, the Board would only need to provide relief of one required parking space. Mr. Benson said that the applicant needs one TDM for the commercial space and one for the residential space, and he did not feel that what they have currently proposed is sufficient. He stated that he was willing to give the applicant the relief of one parking space if they add the additional affordable unit. The applicant indicated that they were willing to add an additional affordable unit. Mr. Lau stated that he has a different approach to the parking. He is willing to give them greater relief on parking because they have already made changes that the Board requested (removing the tandem parking space and increasing the commercial space). Given that the applicant did what the Board previously asked, he does not think that the Board should ask for more, but should grant the requested parking relief without further requirements. Mr. Revilak said that he thinks the Town generally requires more parking than necessary, so he would be in favor of giving the applicant parking relief, especially because of the public transportation options available. The Chair agreed with Mr. Lau and Mr. Revilak. If the applicant chooses to add another affordable unit, that would be great, but she would not require that in order to grant them parking relief, both because they met the Board's earlier requirements about removing the tandem parking and because they are in one of the most transit-friendly parts of Arlington. The Chair noted that the Board is predominantly in favor of allowing the requested parking relief without requiring an additional affordable unit, although Mr. Benson disagrees. Attorney Annese said that he thinks that the client would not choose to add an additional affordable unit if it's not required, because they have already gone to great lengths to meet the Board's requirements.

On the issue of the loading zone on Chandler Street: The Chair said that Board will communicate to the Select Board their support of a loading zone on Chandler Street, and encourage the applicant to work with the Select Board on this issue.

On the issue of requiring a payment to the Arlington Tree Fund in lieu of the placement of trees on Lake Street: Ms. Lynema said that the new bylaw on the payment says that the payment should be in the amount of the full and fair market value of each tree. All the Board members expressed their support for requiring a payment for the cost of two trees, and the applicant indicated that they were be willing to do so.

The Chair asked the rest of the Board if they wanted the applicant to come back to the Board to address the following issues versus deferring it to administrative approval:

- Seeing a sample of the lighter exterior material
- Ensuring the solar panels are far enough from the edge of the roof so that a guardrail is not required
- Swapping the locations of the living room and bedroom in the southeast corner of the building
- Showing the bike parking interior enclosure with controlled access
- Changing the specification on the bike rack to a mechanical assist rather than the necessity of physical lifting
- Payment to the Arlington Tree Fund in lieu of two trees on Lake Street
- Adding one additional tree on Chandler Street
- Providing a specification for the light fixtures and a lighting plan in the open parking area
- Looking at a blade sign for the side of the building and limiting the number of signs on each side of the building, with the understanding that no signage is currently being approved
- Returning the brick at the rear façade of the building
- Adding a tree protection plan
- Reaching out to a wider radius of abutters, including those on Chandler Street, to discuss demolition and construction details.

All Board members expressed willingness to defer the above issues to administrative approval by the staff of DPCD.

The Chair summarized the Board's findings:

- The reduction of the parking is acceptable given the agreement to work with DPCD staff on TDMs for the commercial and residential space, and given the proximity of the property to non-automotive transit options.
- The step-back from the lot line is approved.
- The set-back on the non-street frontage side of the building is appropriate.
- The five compact parking spaces are approved.
- The proposed open space, both landscaped and usable, is approved.
- The applicant can make a payment in the amount of the fair market value of two trees to the Arlington Tree Fund in lieu of adding trees on Lake Street.

Mr. Benson asked if the Board would like to give the DPCD staff any guidance on the TDMs. Mr. Revilak would like the residential TDM to include unbundling parking from rent. The Chair said that the commercial TDM will depend on the type of business occupying the commercial space, which is not yet known.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve Docket #3650 for 190-200 Massachusetts Avenue, including the Board's findings as listed above, with the condition of the applicant submitting documentation of their plans for all the issues to be addressed by administrative review, as listed above, and subject to all the Board's standard conditions. Mr. Lau so moved. Mr. Revilak seconded. Mr. Revilak, Mr. Lau, and the Chair all voted yes, and Mr. Benson voted no. Mr. Benson requested that the reason for his no vote be put on the record. He said that he thinks it is a good project that will help the town and is what the Town has envisioned for Mass Ave. He voted no because he thinks that the reasons given for reducing the required number of parking spaces does not meet the criteria of the zoning bylaw. He thinks that requiring another affordable unit would have been a better way to allow for the parking relief, and he is disappointed that that requirement will not be made.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 2 – Open Space and Recreation Plan Update.**

The Chair invited Wendy Richter, the Board's designee on the Open Space Committee and the Committee's co-chair, to update the Board about the work of the Open Space Committee and the new Open Space and Recreation Plan. She thanked the Board for their support in the development of the plan, which the Board approved in the summer of 2022. The plan is now available online and in hard copy. The plan includes a number of action items in which the Board are involved:

- Explore future development and redevelopment projects, particularly those within environmental justice communities to incorporate meaningful open spaces and recreation opportunities onsite for residents. Walking and biking connections should be prioritized to nearby recreational facilities, conservation areas, and other public spaces.
- Continue to implement Connect Arlington to increase multi-modal opportunities in town and address safety access and efficiency of walking, biking, and transit use, particularly around town public spaces and recreational areas.
- Continue to implement strategies from the Mill Brook Corridor report to expand public access and restore and enhance the natural features of the corridor, such as Cooke's Hollow.
- Enforce the conditions of the Zoning Board of Appeals 2021 decision on Thorndike Place, the Mugar property, regarding establishment of a perpetual conservation restriction on the designated 12-acre conservation parcel.
- Use native and pollinator friendly vegetation appropriate for an urban environment in town landscaping projects, including more curb-side rain gardens focused on the Mass Ave corridor and other commercial streets.
- Review Town policies and regulations to ensure that they include climate impact considerations on natural systems and their ecological functions and identify updates as needed.

Ms. Richter asked that the Board keep these action items in mind. If a project is coming before the Board that is relevant to open space, she asked that she be notified so that the Open Space Committee can be part of the deliberation.

The Chair said that the Board has been talking about the importance of ensuring that the private open space in the developments that they see is truly usable for the residents.

Mr. Lau asked if sidewalks are included in the plan. He referred to the use of sidewalk and street space as seating by restaurants, which he thinks is a good thing because it adds to the streetscape and the liveliness of the town. He dislikes the brick sidewalks in the Center, particularly around the library and Town Hall, which are very uneven and a trip hazard.

Mr. Benson agreed with Mr. Lau's assessment of the sidewalks in and near the Town Garden. He also said that when the Open Space Committee first presented the plan to the Board, he commented that the Town needs to look at whether its open space is doing its job for all the various ethnic groups in town. For example, none of the open spaces include spaces designed for cricket, but there are now residents who play cricket at Spy Pond Field and need to make do with a baseball diamond that doesn't fit their needs.

Ms. Richter addressed the issue of unsafe brick sidewalks. She said that the Open Space Committee has no jurisdiction over the sidewalks; that is the responsibility of the Department of Public Works. She agrees that it is an accessibility issue and would like to see the older bricks replaced with safer surfaces.

Ms. Richter also said that she would like to see increased conversations between the Open Space Committee and the Board about residential density. As density increases, the need for public open spaces increases. She said that she sees Mass Ave as a big open space. It is not primarily a green space, but if trees, rain gardens, and parklets are added, it becomes a green streetscape as opposed to just a transit corridor.

Mr. Revilak said that the City of Somerville did a curb study, looking at parking, bicycle lanes, public open spaces, loading areas for businesses, etc. He would like to see Arlington do a similar survey to better assess the optimal use of the streetscape. He thinks that overall, we devote too much space to cars.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 3 – EDR Application Review**.

Ms. Lynema thanked the Board for reviewing the revised Environmental Design Review application. The goal of the revision is to clarify the process and address some of the common oversights that have occurred in past reviews. The intention is to use the revised document be the primary application, and then to create two smaller applications – one for signs and one for a change of use. She asked if the Board had any additional feedback.

Mr. Lau said that he wanted to add to the application the requirement that when an applicant shows the elevation of their proposed development, they also show the elevation of their neighbors, so that it is easier to make comparisons and see how it will look in context.

Mr. Benson said that Ms. Lynema did a good job with the revision. The Chair commented that it is now much clearer.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 4 – Schedule for 2023 Annual Town Meeting**.

Ms. Lynema reported that the Board has reduced the total number of hearings to two. Next week, on Monday, March 6, 2023, the Board will hear four amendments:

- A citizen petition from Kristen Anderson regarding animal day care use in the industrial districts.
- The level of stormwater that should be retained for an additional height bonus in the industrial districts.
- Incorporating the solar bylaw into the industrial district zoning.
- The minor update to Section 3.1B, based on feedback from the Attorney General.

The following week, on Monday, March 13, 2023, the Board will hear three further amendments:

- A citizen petition from James Fleming regarding downtown business parking minimums.
- A citizen petition from James Fleming regarding one- and two-family usable open space.
- A citizen petition from Tom Perkins regarding building affordable housing anywhere.

March 20 and March 27, 2023, were both held for meetings of the Board to hear any other proposed zoning amendments. There are no pending applications for those dates, and it's too now late for any further applications. The Board is scheduled to deliberate and vote on the amendments on Monday, April 3, and to approve the Board's report to Town Meeting on Thursday, April 6. With that schedule in mind, the Board may not need the meetings on March 20 and 27.

The Chair proposed using the March 27 meeting to deliberate and vote on the amendments, and then approving the Board's report to Town Meeting on Monday, April 3. Ms. Lynema noted that the legal advertisement about the process by which zoning amendments could be brought before the Board indicated that Board will be meeting on April 3 and April 7. She was not sure if they can make the Chair's proposed change to the schedule, but she will look into it.

Mr. Revilak asked if the open March meetings could be used to hear from the applicant for the development at 99 Mass Ave and/or have a discussion about economic development with the Economic Development Coordinator and a representative of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Lynema replied that the applicant for 99 Mass Ave is already scheduled to come to the Board meeting on March 6. She also said that she would contact the Economic Development Coordinator and the Arlington Chamber of Commerce about their availability.

The Chair proposed not meeting on March 20. She suggested that at the March 27 meeting, the Board will, if possible, deliberate and vote on the zoning amendments. The Board will also plan to use the March 27 and April 3 meetings to have an economic development discussion and an update from the MBTA Communities Working Group, those agenda items to be scheduled based on the availability of the people involved.

Mr. Benson noted that they also need to vote to postpone some of the Board warrant articles until the fall. Ms. Lynema said that she would put that on the agenda for March 6.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 5 – Open Forum.**

The Chair invited any residents who wished to address the Board to do so.

Steve Moore, Piedmont Street – Mr. Moore asked why the Board is not holding hybrid meetings when many other groups are.

The Chair responded that as a member of the Remote Participation Study Group, she could respond to that question. The Study Group has identified that hybrid meetings are working well for some groups and not for others. It is working well for those groups that do not typically conduct hearings and also don't need a lot of staff support to run the hybrid meeting. The Redevelopment Board holds hearings involving public response, and holding hybrid meetings would require a third staff person to attend the meetings to adequately run a hybrid meeting because of the volume of information and comment. The Study Group had a lengthy discussion about whether hybrid meetings could be held by the Redevelopment Board, and they agreed that the technology challenges for the particular needs of the Board are such that hybrid meetings are not currently feasible.

Mr. Moore responded that the option of remote participation enabled much higher levels of public participation in many types of meetings, and it is clear that public participation in Board meetings has diminished considerably since the return to in-person meetings. He also commented that the volume of information and discussion of the Redevelopment Board is similar to that of the Zoning Board of Appeals, and they seem to be conducting hybrid meetings without difficulty.

The Chair said that the Board feels very strongly that meeting in person is the best option for the Board. Some of the in-person meetings have had high turnout, and it has been a positive experience to be in the room together and face to face with applicants and residents when working through sometimes very difficult and emotional issues. Because of the personal connection and the empathy engendered by being in the room together, they have been able to come to solutions that meet the needs of business owners and residents in a way that was extremely difficult to do when meetings are remote or hybrid.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 6 – Meeting Minutes.**

The Chair asked if any of the Board members had any comments on the minutes of the January 3, 2023, meeting. She then asked for a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Lau so moved, and Mr. Benson seconded. The Board voted unanimously.

The Chair asked if any of the Board members had any comments on the minutes of the February 6, 2023, meeting. She then asked for a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Lau so moved, and Mr. Benson seconded. The Board voted unanimously.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 7 – New Business.**

Ms. Lynema said that on March 1, 2023, Talia Fox, the Town of Arlington Sustainability Manager, will be holding an informational Town Forum on the differences between the Specialized Stretch Code versus the Stretch Code. Town Meeting will vote in April on whether or not to adopt the Specialized Stretch Code. The forum, which will be held virtually, includes a panel of experts to explain the issues involved.

Ms. Lynema also reported that the MBTA Communities Working Group will be holding a virtual Community Visioning Session on Thursday, March 9, at 7:00 pm. The Working Group has held its second meeting, and it recommended gathering information from the community to better understand the goals and priorities for multi-family housing in Arlington. The Community Visioning Session will include break-out groups and a poll, and the Working Group will create a companion survey to go out to the community. They are also working on putting together a Meeting in a Box kit so that any resident can run a similar session with neighbors or other groups they are a part of in the community.

Ms. Ricker shared that the final public meeting for the Massachusetts Avenue/Appleton Street Corridor Project will be held on Wednesday, March 15. This will be the last opportunity for public comment. The Select Board has given a letter of support to apply for additional funding to move forward with designing the corridor. The Town has already been

awarded Mass Works funding for the design process. Ms. Ricker expressed that she would appreciate the attendance of the members of the Board at the March 15 meeting.

The Chair expressed appreciation for all the work that Ms. Lynema, Ms. Ricker, and the whole DPCD is doing on all these and other projects.

Mr. Revilak reminded the Board of the new Section 5.42.B(8) of the zoning bylaws— the recently added provision in the bylaw that allows someone to reconstruct a home on a non-confirming lot, provided that the new home meets a certain energy efficiency standard and is not more than 750 square feet larger than the previous structure. He recently learned that the first house was built under this provision. It is on Palmer Street; it is a duplex and has a HERS (Home Energy Rating System) rating of 38, which is better than required.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn to Town Meeting. Mr. Lau so moved, and Mr. Benson seconded. The board voted and approved unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:50 pm.

DRAFT

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, April 3, 2023, at 7:30 PM
Community Center, Main Hall
27 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Rachel Zsembery (Chair), Eugene Benson, Kin Lau, Stephen Revilak

STAFF: Claire Ricker, Director, Planning and Community Development; Kelly Lynema, Assistant Director, Planning and Community Development

The Chair called the meeting of the Board to order.

The Chair opened with **Agenda Item 1 – 2023 Annual Town Meeting – Report to Town Meeting.**

The Chair thanked Ms. Ricker and Ms. Lynema for preparing the Report to Town Meeting. Ms. Ricker summarized the Warrant Articles included in the Report, and the Board members had the opportunity to make comments:

- Warrant Article 26 – Industrial Development Standards – to establish the design criteria for stormwater management. Previous comments by Board members have been incorporated into the current Report, and the Board had no further comments.
- Warrant Article 27 – Solar Bylaw Industrial Districts – to make an administrative addition to the bylaw to include the industrial districts under the solar bylaw. Previous comments by Board members have been incorporated into the current Report. Mr. Benson had one further comment on page 6: he would like projects not subject to Environmental Design Review to be able to choose solar as an option. Mr. Revilak agreed, as long as the phrase “In projects not subject to Environmental Design Review” is included for clarity. The other Board members agreed as well, and the Board had no further comments.
- Warrant Article 28 – administrative adjustment to delete a section from the Zoning Bylaw that has been deemed by the Attorney General’s office to be inappropriate or illegal. The Board had no further comments.
- Warrant Article 29 – citizen petition endorsed by the Board – to eliminate the parking minimum in the B5 district. The location of the Russell parking lot and railroad parking lot make the parking requirement unnecessary. The Board had no comments.
- Warrant Article 30 – One-and Two-Family Usable Open Space – citizen petition endorsed by the Board – to eliminate usable open space requirements for one- and two-family residential districts. The Chair said that she would like to clarify that it only applies to dwellings. The Board agreed and had no further comments.
- Warrant Article 31 – citizen petition endorsed by the Board - to allow for animal day care use in the industrial district. The Board had no comments.
- Warrant Article 32 – vote of No Action for building affordable housing anywhere. The Board had no comments.

Mr. Lau moved to approve the submission of the Report to Town Meeting as amended. Mr. Benson seconded. The Board unanimously voted to approve.

The Chair stated that Ms. Ricker and Ms. Lynema will prepare the presentation of the Board’s Warrant Articles to Town Meeting. The Chair said that if these Articles come up on the first night of Town Meeting, she can do the presentation, but if not, she will be unavailable, and Mr. Benson will do the presentation.

The Chair moved to Agenda Item 2 – Comprehensive Permit Application for 10 Sunnyside Avenue.

The Housing Corporation of Arlington has applied for a permit to build an affordable housing development at 10 Sunnyside Avenue, which will be heard by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The ZBA has requested review and input from the Redevelopment Board. Ms. Ricker presented the application. 10 Sunnyside is a former auto shop site, near Alewife Brook. The proposed development is 43 units. They are planning for tenants with 60% AMI (area median income). They have proposed including 23 parking spaces. The development will also include commercial space. Ms. Ricker stated that there was an interdepartmental review and first look at the plans. The goal is to begin construction in the spring of 2024, with a 14-month build.

Mr. Lau stated that he is supportive of the project. He asked if the developers planned to get rid of the power pole currently on the site, which he felt would interfere with the residential units. He also proposed that they add more outdoor lighting in the area because it's currently poorly lit.

Mr. Benson said he thinks it is a wonderful project for Arlington, bringing needed affordable units in a good location for transportation options. He said that the developers have provided two different documents citing the minimum required parking spaces, both of which are incorrect. He said that one parking space per unit is typically required, and they are entitled to a 10% reduction because it is affordable housing, meaning 39 parking spaces. Because they are proposing only 23 parking spaces, they are asking for a significant reduction in the requirement. He also noted that they have significantly less bicycle parking than is required. He proposed that the reduction in parking spaces be granted in return for providing the additional bicycle parking.

Mr. Benson said that it was not clear to him what the office in the left-hand commercial corner of the development was intended to be. Ms. Lynema said that the Housing Corporation of Arlington does not currently have a tenant for that space. The HCA is interested in working with the Town to create a business and commuter program. The HCA might use the office space, or the commercial space might be combined to be a retail space. Mr. Benson said that for the development to qualify as mixed-use, the commercial space needs to be meaningful space. It's a nice idea to put some sort of retail there to liven the streetscape, but it needs further consideration.

Mr. Benson noted that the development has almost no open space. However, it is a block away from the Alewife Greenway, and a playground is nearby, so he is not concerned about the lack of open space in the development. The applicant did not say whether they intended to meet the street tree requirements.

Mr. Benson said that the façade is very plain. He does not like the fact that an affordable housing development often looks unappealing, and he would like that not to be the case with this development.

Mr. Revilak said that he is overall in support of the project and thinks it will be an improvement of the site. He is happy to see that they are willing to work with the Town to put sidewalks on their side of the street, and he likes the plan to include a roof deck with plantings. He asked if the high water table will be a problem. He also noted that the transportation impact plan did not include a mode adjustment, which he thinks should be included due to the location.

The Chair agreed that it is a well-thought-out proposal, and she appreciates having an affordable housing development in this particular location. She said that the massing is well-considered, which serves to break down the scale of the building facing Sunnyside, especially with the roof deck above the entrance to the parking garage. She is concerned with the rear of the building, which is a completely flat façade with no articulation. She would encourage the architect and the ZBA to look at some sort of articulation to the façade. She appreciated the use of color in some locations, and it would be nice to see color or another element to be used elsewhere to break down the monolithic look.

The Chair also had questions about the intention of the commercial space. It does not present as a public space with the current façade. She would like to see a differentiation between the entrance to the commercial space and the entrance to the lobby. She said that the commercial space should be made larger, because it is difficult to make 600 square feet a usable commercial space. She would like to see an increase to 1000 square feet, especially if the AHA intends to lease it and have it be income-generating.

The Chair asked about the material proposed for the guardrail and balcony for the green space. It looks in the drawing like it might be chain link, which she thinks is a mistake. She also did not like the screening included in between the brick

bays of the garage and would encourage them to look at a screening element that is not reminiscent of chain link. She would also like to know what material is being used for the rolling grill of the garage entrance. Some materials can be very noisy.

Mr. Lau agreed with the previous comments about the blandness of the façade. He appreciates the HCA's attempt to fit in as many units as possible so doesn't want to make it too difficult for them by focusing on the visual appeal of the exterior. But he said that they can do a lot to improve the look by using color and materials. He mentioned 602 Concord St, Cambridge, as an example of a good use of color. He also agreed with the Chair's comments about chain link.

Mr. Benson said that a release on the site was reported to DEP about 20 years ago, when it was still an auto body shop. It's worth bringing to the attention of the ZBA. He said that more site investigation should be done to make sure that it is an appropriate location for residences.

Mr. Revilak would like to see more windows on the first floor, or something else to break up the solid wall.

Ms. Ricker asked about the possibility of removing the commercial space entirely, either to create more open space or bicycle parking, or to use as a programmable space for tenants. The Chair said that if it's not possible to make it a viable, leasable commercial space, having a rentable, programmable community space would be a great amenity for the community. She does have concerns about that space being under-utilized and proposed that perhaps the HCA would use it for their programming. Mr. Benson pointed out that there is a community room on the second floor. The Chair replied that community space on the second floor is less useful than on the first floor. Mr. Lau said that if the commercial space isn't viable and leasable, he's intrigued by the idea of returning that space to the tenants in some way. Ms. Lynema said that the HCA didn't want to create a purely residential building, because the restrictions on that use are more severe than on a mixed-use building, and one option is for the HCA to use the commercial space as additional office space.

Ms. Lynema said that she would compile the Board's comments and send them to the Board members for a final review before sending them to the ZBA.

The Chair moved to Agenda Item 3 – 2023 Special Town Meeting – Outreach and Engagement.

Ms. Ricker reported that the Board has discussed a variety of potential zoning amendments to business districts, which the Board was asked to postpone until the fall Special Town Meeting. The Board now needs to think about how to engage the community in preparation for bringing those Warrant Articles to Town Meeting.

Mr. Lau suggested allowing restaurants in business districts to have sidewalk seating by right, without having to go to the Select Board every year. The Chair responded that it was an interesting idea, but she would want to have a chance to review the plans for outdoor seating, because some of them aren't very good. She thinks it would be a good idea for the Redevelopment Board to work together with the Select Board to determine the extent to which the Select Board feels they need to maintain control over the process. Mr. Lau responded that the Town could allow it as of right, with guidelines on where it can be done and how it should be done to cover the design aspect, rather than requiring people to go before the Board to present their design every time. Mr. Benson agreed that it was worth raising with the Select Board. He said that zoning doesn't extend to the public streets, so the Redevelopment Board can't add it to the zoning bylaws. He proposed trying to find a way to incentivize developers building with small outdoor spaces in front of the buildings, so that outdoor dining is a possibility on the sidewalks.

Ms. Lynema commented that the Board already wants to work on establishing new design standards, and it might make more sense to include the curb in those standards rather than complicating the zoning. Thinking about it from a design standard perspective gives the Board more flexibility to consider it on a project by project basis. The Select Board may have jurisdiction over the space, but the Redevelopment Board could have jurisdiction over the look and feel of the outdoor dining. Mr. Revilak responded that he would like to see the Town think about curb management on a broader level.

Mr. Lau talked about the Board's process of designing the plaza on Broadway in front of Caffe Nero, Donut Villa Diner, and Thai Moon. He would like the Board to do the same sort of thing on a smaller scale in multiple areas on public sidewalks, designing things like rain gardens and parklets.

Ms. Ricker reminded the Board that they have proposed nine Warrant Articles for the fall Town Meeting directly related to business districts: open space, rear yard set-backs, step-back requirements, reduced height buffer, corner lot height minimums, Arlington Heights Business District, and Redevelopment Board jurisdiction over industrial districts. These will go before the fall Town Meeting, along with MBTA Communities, and the Board needs to think about what kind of outreach and community engagement they want to do.

Mr. Benson said that they should have diagrams and illustrations so that people get a sense of what the changes might look like. It would also be good to have some economic analysis of the potential advantage in terms of tax revenue and other economic issues. Once the Board has put together those sorts of materials, they should have conversations with the business community, to get their input about what would be most helpful for them.

The Chair had some initial conversations with Beth Locke from the Chamber of Commerce, who was interested in learning more about what the Board has proposed in terms of supporting businesses and business development in town. The Chamber is focused on reinvigorating their activity within the town, and they're interested in how they might support some of the goals of the Board.

Mr. Revilak suggested starting outreach with property owners and members of the business community. Ideally, the Board should work in partnership with the businesses and landlords. If they are on board, it would be easier to persuade others in.

Mr. Lau thinks that the Board should start with realtors. They are the ones trying to lease available commercial spaces, so they hear a lot about what works or doesn't work for businesses. That would help the Board better understand what businesses need.

The Chair said that the Board should go through the nine Warrant Articles and determine which ones need renderings of what it could look like, rather than simple diagrams, to enable people to see what's possible. The Arlington Heights Business District overlay is one that definitely needs clear renderings to show people the barriers that currently exist and how the overlay district would help remove those barriers. The Board also needs to help people understand the difference between renovated, usable vacant commercial space that is ready for a future tenant, and vacant space that requires so much remediation and investment that it's almost unusable for the majority of commercial tenants. Many people see vacant storefronts and assume there's a lot of space available, and we need to make clear that there's actually very little usable space.

The Chair asked Ms. Ricker how much money is available to create the sorts of materials they've been discussing. Ms. Ricker responded that she would find out.

The Chair suggested revisiting the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan and seeing what materials were created for that, because some of those materials might be useful at least as a starting point to think about what's needed. Ms. Lynema agreed to send the Action Plan to the Board members. At one point, an Implementation Committee was regularly meeting to implement the Action Plan, and their members were very engaged with the process; it might be good to reach out to some of them about the process of creating an overlay district.

Ms. Ricker summed up the suggestions the Board members had made:

- Pin down the narrative.
- Do some initial stakeholder outreach to the business community.
- Reach out to Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee.
- Try to start telling the story with visuals – look into what kind of materials we'd like to produce.

Mr. Benson pointed out that all this material needs to be ready in September, and Mr. Lau said that it might not be enough time. The Chair said that the Board can ask which of the Warrant Articles need a diagram or a visualization or an economic analysis. She proposed that all the Board members go back through the nine Articles and decide what sort of materials and/or analysis needs to be prepared for each Article in order to help the Board make the case for that Article. They should then send that to Ms. Lynema and Ms. Ricker to compile into a comprehensive list. Ms. Lynema said she would also make sure that the Board has copies of memos previously prepared about the Warrant Articles.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 4 – Open Forum.**

No members of the public attended the meeting.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 5 – New Business.**

The Chair said that the Board's next meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2023, which is also the first night of Town Meeting, to be held at Town Hall. She proposed meeting from 7:00 to 7:45 in the Town Hall Annex and then adjourning to Town Meeting. She said that Ms. Ricker, the Town Manager, the Town Counsel, the Select Board Chair, and herself as Redevelopment Board Chair, should set up a meeting to discuss which of the Board's Warrant Articles should be on the consent agenda.

The Chair said that the Select Board, which is meeting concurrently with the Redevelopment Board, is reviewing the memo that the Board reviewed and voted on for Article 14, related to the Strategic Growth Article and the request for a Memorandum of Understanding for the transfer of the three Redevelopment Board properties. Ms. Ricker said that she and Town Counsel Doug Heim have gone through a few initial drafts of an MOU.

Ms. Ricker said that she has identified a candidate for the fifth slot on the Board. She asked if the members of the Board would like to continue looking for a candidate with specific expertise in planning, construction, development, or something else relevant to the Board's work, or if they should offer it to someone who has expressed interest. Mr. Benson has someone in mind he would like to reach out to. Mr. Revilak will also try to think of potential candidates.

Ms. Ricker mentioned that the Board has previously discussed an Urban Renewal Plan, and that the town is currently operating without one. She said that she has been thinking about it and has reviewed plans that she previously worked on in Lowell, particularly around industrial districts. If the Board is interested in looking at urban renewal, she can provide them with the information that she has pulled together. She said that one of the benefits of creating an Urban Renewal Plan is that it involves parcel aggregation, enabling larger buildings to be built. Such a plan would include a list of potential acquisitions, which would enable the Board to ultimately create large industrial parcels which they can distribute to developers planning large development projects. The Board needs to think about how much and what type of industrial development is realistic for Arlington. Mr. Benson said he would like to go out and walk through the industrial districts before sharing his thoughts about an Urban Renewal Plan. He is not sure that combining parcels would serve the town, because many small businesses operate out of the industrial districts. The main difference between an Urban Renewal Plan and an Industrial Master Plan is that the Redevelopment Board would retain its authority with an Urban Renewal Plan. The Chair said that the Board members should re-read the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan because it includes not only Mass Ave, but also the industrial area between Mass Ave, Park Street, and Summer Street. Mr. Lau asked if the Board has the bandwidth to do an Urban Renewal Plan, especially with their goal of creating a new Master Plan. Ms. Ricker said if the Board doesn't want to pursue an official Urban Renewal Plan, then it should consider transferring any other property back to the Town for maintenance and operations, and focus more on the planning aspect of the Board's work. Mr. Benson said that he thinks the Board can accomplish more by setting up an Urban Renewal Plan than by updating the Master Plan. The Chair said that the Board keeps coming back to the Russell Common lot as a parcel that is significantly underutilized. If the Board were to create an Urban Renewal Plan, she would like to see it include the Russell Common lot and nearby areas. Mr. Lau reminded the Board that they have talked about updating the Master Plan for several years. The Chair said that the two are not mutually exclusive; the Urban Renewal Plan is a long process. Ms. Ricker said she brought up the possibility of an Urban Renewal Plan because the Town Counsel holds that for lack of an active Plan, the Board cannot own or hold property.

Mr. Revilak said that he will be working with the Affordable Housing Trust in their efforts to develop an affordable housing overlay.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn to Town Meeting. Mr. Lau so moved, and Mr. Benson seconded. The board voted and approved unanimously.

Meeting **Adjourned** at 9:30 pm.

**Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, June 26, 2023, at 7:30 PM
Community Center, Main Hall
27 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476
Meeting Minutes**

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Rachel Zsembery (Chair), Eugene Benson, Kin Lau, Stephen Revilak

STAFF: Claire Ricker, Director, Planning and Community Development

The Chair called the meeting of the Board to order.

The Chair opened with **Agenda Item 1 – Public Hearing Docket #3752 Calyx Peak 251 Summer Street.**

Ms. Ricker reported that the applicant requested postponement until August 28. The Chair asked Ms. Ricker about the hearing schedule for Fall Town Meeting, and she responded that those hearings would also start on August 28. The Chair expressed concern that the agenda for August 28 is quite full, and requested that the public hearing be kept to its allotted time. She asked for a motion to continue the public hearing for Docket #3752 to August 28, 2023. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 2 – Review Meeting Minutes.**

March 13, 2023 – Mr. Revilak and Mr. Benson both said they had no comments beyond what was already submitted to staff, and they confirmed that their edits had been included. The Chair requested one change – that the Alewife Group referred to on page two be specified as Save the Alewife Brook. The Chair requested a motion to approve the March 13 minutes as amended. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

March 27, 2023 – The Board had no further comments on the minutes. The Chair requested a motion to approve the March 27 minutes as amended. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

April 24, 2023 – The Board had no further comments on the minutes. The Chair requested a motion to approve the March 27 minutes as amended. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

May 1, 2023 – The Board had no further comments on the minutes. The Chair requested a motion to approve the March 27 minutes as amended. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 3 – Review Board Meeting Schedule.**

The Chair noted that the proposed October meetings are subject to change or addition based on the finalization of the Town Meeting schedule. Mr. Lau asked for clarification about when the public hearings on MBTA Communities would be. The Chair suggested that that issue be discussed during the MBTA Communities discussion later in the meeting. The Chair requested a motion to approve the July to December 2023 meeting schedule as submitted. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 4 – MOU for former ARB Properties.**

Ms. Ricker reported that she received a draft MOU back from the Town Manager and Town Counsel. She distributed it to the Board, and she received a revised version from Mr. Benson the day of the meeting, which none of the other Board members had had a chance to review yet. After discussion of Mr. Benson's changes, the Chair requested a motion to authorize the Chair to execute the MOU as amended on behalf of the Board. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 5 – MBTA Communities discussion.**

The Chair invited the MBTA Communities Working Group to join the Board for a working session. She also thanked the Working Group for all their work on this project. The members of the Working Group in attendance introduced themselves – Sanjay Newton, Mette Aamodt, Rebecca Gruber, and Vincent Baudoin. Kin Lau and Stephen Revilak are members of both the Board and the Working Group.

Ms. Ricker shared the most recent version of the draft map, incorporating the latest changes requested by the Working Group on June 20, 2023. This version of the map includes some property on Broadway, which was requested at the June 8 public meeting. It also includes some quantification of density. The Working Group was concerned that if the new zoning was all for three-family buildings, it might not result in any meaningful amount of new housing. They asked Utile to model a four-story building which could contain anywhere from four to twelve units. Utile also quantified the potential amount of new housing with a cap of 30 units per acre versus having no cap on units per acre. Zoning for four-story buildings throughout the new district would yield up to 3,158 total (not new) units with a cap of 30 units per acre, and up to 7,879 total (not new) units with no cap. Mr. Newton requested that future such calculations include the current number of units in the new district for the purposes of comparison. The Chair asked what the minimum requirement for new units is, and Ms. Ricker replied that it is 2,046 new units.

Mr. Baudoin asked Mr. Benson and the Chair for their impressions of the June 8 meeting. Mr. Benson replied that he thought it was a well-run meeting and he was impressed with the number of attendees. He pointed out two items in the handout from the meeting that he thought were misleading: 1) that three-family development is not cost-effective – he provided two examples of recent three-family homes that were built, one in Arlington and one in Cambridge; and 2) that an incentive could be structured successfully for mixed-use if the residential overlay were in business zones. The Chair was also pleased with the meeting. She appreciated the community engagement and the creative ideas put forward. She was especially pleased with the extent to which the community was in favor of MBTA Communities, and the extent to which they also wanted to prioritize the town's commercial development.

Mr. Newton reported that the Working Group came away from the June 8 meeting feeling that they're headed in the right direction, and it's just a matter of further refinement.

Ms. Aamodt said that she has been studying urban planning and design and architecture for many years and is very passionate about this issue. Her goal is to articulate the huge opportunity that the MBTA Communities 3A legislation is, and that this could lead to the biggest zoning change in Arlington in 50 years, which would be a good thing for Arlington. It is difficult to pass any zoning changes in Arlington, and incremental changes often get taken apart. The 3A legislation is not business as usual and may allow for significant changes. Lexington has passed an ambitious MBTA Communities plan which includes numerous changes to their zoning which go beyond the scope of the 3A legislation, and she thinks that Arlington can do that too. The Working Group has done a lot of good work, but there are a few significant issues it hasn't addressed. One is the redevelopment of Massachusetts Avenue. Everyone she has talked to believes that there should be more density along Mass Ave and that we should protect the commercial and industrial zoning. She believes that we can do both of those things. She proposed that some of the ARB's current initiatives be rolled into the 3A proposal, for example, the Arlington Heights, Arlington Center, and Capital Square Business Districts. That way, we'll know which areas of Mass Ave will be set aside for mixed use commercial development, and which might be available for 3A multi-family housing. She also proposed that we allow neighborhood office uses in R1 and R2 districts, only for parcels that face certain majorstreets, which the ARB would designate. That would allow such uses to stay off Mass Ave, allowing more commercial developments there. There are 83 B1 parcels on Mass Ave. Those parcels could be rezoned either in a mixed-use, high density central business district or for multi-family housing. She said that the current map represents a lukewarm compliance plan, and it is possible to do a lot more with this legislation if the Working Group and the Development Board coordinates their efforts and puts forth something that is more comprehensive.

Mr. Revilak said that the current version of the map in some ways resembles the way the zoning map of Arlington looked before 1975, with a significant focus on corridors. He is torn about how to handle the parcels right on Mass Ave; it would make sense to use the residential parcels for multi-family housing, but the Board has also wanted to increase the commercial activity along Mass Ave. Rezoning the business districts has been on the to-do list since at least 2015; it

is the first recommendation in the economic development section of the Master Plan. He likes the idea of trying to think a little more holistically about what we're doing with MBTA Communities and what we want for the future of Mass Ave.

Mr. Lau commented that he likes the way that the draft maps are progressing. He thinks the corridor approach works well, and the next step is to consider the different densities along the different sections of the corridors. He would like to designate zones where there can be future growth of commercial space. He liked Ms. Aamodt's idea of moving some of the lower B1 uses onto side streets, which would allow for more commercial growth along the major streets. The zoning put in place now may take 50 years to develop, and he wants to make sure that the Working Group and Board are thinking ahead enough to plan for the future.

Mr. Benson said that he agreed with the addition of Broadway to the proposed zoning overlay area. He also said that while it makes sense to add taller buildings on Mass Ave, he would like to see development on parcels moving away from Mass Ave be smaller, because that would be more in character with the town. In considering Mass Ave, which already has seven-story apartment buildings, he thinks that the current plans for four-story development might be too small. He would like to allow mixed-use development in all residential zones along Mass Ave and Broadway. If allowing more height in developments which include first-floor commercial space acts as an effective incentive, it could create more retail space for the town as a whole. If it doesn't, those zones remain residential, so we haven't lost any commercial space. On the other hand, if we allow residential with mixed-use incentives in the commercial zones and it doesn't work, we may lose space for business. He likes the idea of allowing some types of office space in the R1 and R2 districts, but he thinks that will probably have to be a separate issue that will require a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting rather than trying to roll it into MBTA Communities. He also noted that the Board had decided to hold off on the rezoning of the Arlington Heights Business District until spring so that the fall Town Meeting could focus on MBTA Communities. He still thinks that's a better way to approach it.

The Chair said that in an ideal world, she would love to use MBTA Communities to more significantly change the town's zoning at the same time. But we would need to make sure that we have the capacity to appropriately depict the potential impact of both MBTA Communities and other modifications to the zoning plan. If we try to take on too much, we risk short-changing all these issues. The Department of Planning and Community Development is short-staffed and can only take on so much at any given time. The Board is willing to make significant changes but cannot exceed its capacity. She also said if B1 districts are going to be rezoned, she would prefer that they become other types of B districts rather than housing. Many of them are hemmed in between other business and industrial zones. Long-term, the Board would like to create corridors of similar zoning along Mass Ave, rather than allowing small parcels in among larger business and industrial parcels to become residential. She does not want any parcels that front Mass Ave to be part of the MBTA Communities district as residential only, because that would undermine the long-term goal of uniting the Mass Ave corridor. Ms. Ricker said that the most recent iteration of the map does include parcels along Mass Ave that are currently zoned as residential, but that another version of the map only includes parcels starting at least one parcel back from Mass Ave.

Mr. Newton said that as long as the MBTA Communities district is more than the bare minimum required, it can include the flexibility for future change. If a parcel is included in the district, but in six months the Board would like to include it in a plan for a business district, they can do that, because the remaining district will still meet the state requirement. The Chair responded that allowing that type of change would have a negative impact on the owners of those parcels because they would potentially have to deal with multiple zoning changes in a row.

Mr. Benson asked the Chair for clarification if she was saying that she did not want any parcels along Mass Ave to be included in the MBTA Communities district. She said that was correct. He then said that he wants to allow for the possibility of rezoning some of the residential parcels in the three main business districts as business, so as to better unite those districts, but he does not think that doing so requires not allowing any of Mass Ave to be in the MBTA Communities district. He thinks that the Board should carefully consider each area along Mass Ave and decide what parcels should be protected for potential future commercial development, and what parcels would make sense for multi-family housing. That would allow the Mass Ave corridor to be activated by both residential and commercial use.

Mr. Baudoin said that the Working Group is open to mixed-use, rather than purely residential, zoning along Mass Ave and Broadway. He proposed reserving some space in areas where we hope to grow the business districts, and using incentives to encourage mixed-use developments in other areas. He asked the Board what sort of incentives they thought would be likely to be effective. Mr. Revilak shared that Lexington's plan allowed for three-story residential buildings in certain areas, but if the developer built a mixed-use building with commercial on the first floor, they could add two additional stories of residential units, which he thought might be an effective incentive. Mr. Benson stated that Lexington had no studies on whether the incentives in its rezoning would work. He suggested changing B1 zoning so that it allows commercial use as well as office use.

Ms. Aamodt said that the Working Group would like some of Mass Ave to be a part of the MBTA Communities district. She does not think that a continuous commercial zone along the entire length of Mass Ave is viable. Significant sections of Mass Ave are not part of the three main business districts and currently have a combination of apartment buildings and two- to three-family buildings. Including those areas in the MBTA Communities district would allow for a greater density of housing than would other areas of the town. Having dense residential use on Mass Ave would make for more vibrant business districts as well. She noted that the Working Group is on a faster timeline than the Redevelopment Board. The vast majority of Town Meeting members want to participate in the fossil fuel pilot study, which requires the MBTA Communities district needs to be finished by the end of 2023.

The Chair shared that the plan for the Arlington Heights Business District is more than just drawing a boundary around it. Presenting any kind of zoning plan to Town Meeting requires visuals that will enable people who can't read architectural plans to understand what is being proposed. Creating such visuals takes time and resources that the DPCD is short on right now, so trying to include a plan for the Arlington Heights Business District, or any other ambitious rezoning plans, as a part of the MBTA Communities plan is not feasible.

Ms. Aamodt said that she feels that the planning bodies in Arlington frequently say no and that things can't be done, and she wants to encourage the Board to think about a larger vision. The Chair replied that she was not saying what can't be done, but the process that needs to be followed to get to an agreement.

Mr. Lau said that he agrees with Mr. Benson that having some areas of Mass Ave be residential is okay; we don't need to reserve all of Mass Ave for commercial use. The problem with the commercial areas on Mass Ave is that they're made up of a lot of piecemeal parts. Any residential use that is allowed on Mass Ave should not hem in the commercial areas, so that the commercial use is allowed to grow. Having housing near the commercial district is good because it will increase the foot traffic.

Mr. Newton said that what he is hearing from the Board is that the Working Group should not fill in the holes in the commercial areas with residential zoning. Those holes should be left to allow the commercial uses to grow. The Chair agreed with that assessment. Mr. Newton asked if the sort of incentive that Lexington allowed for mixed-use development allows for commercial growth as the Board envisions it. The Chair said that she would not want such use to be allowed in the holes within the business districts, only in the sections of Mass Ave between business districts.

Ms. Gruber said that as a resident of Arlington, she has never perceived the entirety of Mass Ave as a business district. The three main business districts are walkable and allow for a variety of shopping, dining, and other errands, but going to businesses that are not in one of those three districts generally requires driving and making a single stop. She thinks the stretches of Mass Ave that are not part of those three districts should be seen as an opportunity for multi-family housing. The Chair responded that the business districts should have buffer zones around them that would allow for growth. Ms. Gruber asked if the Board envisions a continuous business district all along Mass Ave in the future. Mr. Lau replied that they can't currently say exactly where the edges of the business districts are. The Board wants to make sure that there is the possibility of combining parcels so that developers can create larger buildings. The Chair would like to take the MBTA Communities focus off Mass Ave so that we don't take away the possibility of commercial growth. Mr. Revilak replied that Mass Ave includes a lot of areas with just one or two businesses. We need to give them space to grow and connect to other business districts and glue together the larger business districts. But there are also areas that are decent-sized residential sections that could be okay to include in MBTA Communities with a mixed-use allowance.

Mr. Newton asked for the Board's thoughts on site plan review. He also asked if the Working Group should be considering design guidelines, although that may not be possible on their timeline. He would also like to confirm that we expect to keep our current inclusionary zoning. The Chair replied that the Town probably needs to update the residential design guidelines, because they are currently primarily focused on one- and two-family homes. The Board will probably need to ask Town Meeting for an appropriation for the work of updating the guidelines.

Mr. Benson said that the Board has previously agreed that to the idea of site plan review for MBTA Communities. They discussed the possibility of allowing administrative review by staff for three-family buildings, with a review by the Board for anything larger. They don't want to exempt smaller buildings entirely, because they don't want to incentivize developers to only build smaller buildings. He also said that we may eventually need new residential design guidelines for larger buildings, but he thinks that we can write enough guidelines into the MBTA Communities plan to allow for effective site plan review. We should ask for the appropriation to make the changes to residential design guidelines, but we should move forward with site plan review in the meantime, since it will take at least a year before the new guidelines funding gets through Town Meeting.

Mr. Lau asked if the Board would do its own community outreach about MBTA Communities, separate from the outreach being done by the Working Group. The Chair responded that once the Board reviews and votes to accept the Working Group's recommendations, the Board will need to create opportunities for public engagement, in conjunction with the Working Group.

Mr. Lau thanked the Working Group for all the work they've done on this project and acknowledged the significant amount of time they have invested. Mr. Newton added his thanks to Ms. Ricker and the DPCD staff, who have also dedicated a great deal of time to MBTA Communities and have made much of the Working Group's work possible.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 6 – Open Forum.**

Wynelle Evans

- Ms. Evans thanked the Board and Working Group for their work. She shared that she had recently read an article saying that even in high-priced urban areas, three-family buildings can be a route to home-ownership, particularly for immigrants. It is important to preserve and renovate older three-family buildings as well as to construct new ones. Three-families also adhere to one of the MBTA Communities guidelines, which is to build for aesthetics, scale, and style. As a result, she thinks that three-families have an important role to play in certain areas as MBTA Communities goes forward.
- Ms. Evans also expressed concern that Arlington not look to Lexington's approach to MBTA Communities as a guide. Lexington has three times Arlington's land area and two-thirds Arlington's population, so they are much less dense and have very different needs.
- Several residents have put a lot of work into creating alternate maps, which do not seem to have been considered by the Board or Working Group. Some of those maps contain interesting and creative ideas that she would like to see considered. Ms. Ricker replied that the maps created by Edwin Fields are on the Working Group's agenda for their meeting on June 27.
- Arlington has residential design guidelines which are voluntary, but the town also has residential design standards, which are mandatory. Since all the new development under MBTA Communities would be by right, would those design standards still apply? The Chair replied that the standards Ms. Evans referred to are actually not part of any zoning code and are not mandatory. Mr. Benson replied that the zoning bylaw includes rules about transparency and other design issues for first floor commercial spaces, which should remain in effect even in an overlay district.

Susan Stamps, 39 Grafton Street

- Ms. Stamps referred to the concept of an Urban Ecology Framework, as shared by Environmental Planner David Morgan at an event in May. She thinks that MBTA Communities is an opportunity to build in the concepts of the Urban Ecology Framework, including issues such as the placement of trees, rain gardens, pollinator gardens,

open spaces, stormwater drains, etc. She would like to see the Working Group connect with the Conservation Commission and the Open Space Committee to include these ideas.

Kristin Anderson, Town Meeting member and Arlington Heights business owner

- Ms. Anderson thanked the Board for supporting Arlington's current and future businesses. She loves the idea mentioned by Mr. Benson at a previous meeting of 15-minute neighborhoods, in which most of what people need is within a 15-minute walk of one's home. She thinks that idea would be desirable for the new MBTA Communities district. New developments should have walkable access to jobs, parks, schools, banks, medical facilities, libraries, theaters, cafes, art galleries, restaurants, farmer's markets, florists, gyms, offices, and a wide variety of diverse businesses. This is a sustainable vision that would reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. She also expressed hope that some of the new housing created by MBTA Communities is permanently affordable.

Brian McBride, member of the Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission

- The Open Space Committee recently sent a letter to the Redevelopment Board, requesting that the kind of consideration being given to commercial space also be given to open space. Open space is a part of what makes towns and neighborhoods livable and vibrant. He is concerned about having a wall of buildings along Mass Ave; the buildings of Mass Ave should be interspersed with small parks and places to sit and enjoy the outdoors and meet neighbors. We need to build the open space in now, because it will be too late if we wait until new buildings have been built.

Aram Hollman, 12 Whittemore Street, Town Meeting member

- Mr. Bowman asked if anyone on the Board addressed the question of the cheapest way to construct housing on any given plot of land. He said that the 3A MBTA Communities legislation gives no consideration to affordability. He fears that Arlington will turn into what he called a "golden ghetto"; it will have lots of housing but be very expensive and will exclude anyone who can't afford expensive housing.

Mr. Benson pointed out that the zoning bylaw includes many features that are triggered by Environmental Design Review. But the new development enabled by MBTA Communities will not require EDR. The Board and the Working Group will need to go through the zoning bylaw and see what needs to be amended so that those features will still be applicable even without EDR.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 7 – New Business.**

Ms. Ricker shared that the MBTA Communities Working Group has chosen to move their meetings to the Arlington Police Department building because they wanted a location that would allow for members to participate remotely.

Mr. Lau had asked at a prior meeting about the status of projects the Board has previously approved. He would appreciate an update on those projects when possible, with the understanding that Ms. Ricker and the DPCD staff are extremely busy and may not be able to provide such updates in the near future.

The Chair addressed next steps. The Board has two more meetings before the August 28 meeting at which they will do Warrant Article review for MBTA Communities, identify final language for the Warrants, and then move into the public hearings. She asked Mr. Newton if the Working Group would like to come back to one of the July meetings. He replied that they could come back on July 24 to share the Working Group's progress.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn to Town Meeting. Mr. Lau so moved, and Mr. Benson seconded. The board voted and approved unanimously.

Meeting **Adjourned** at 9:20 pm.



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

MBTA Communities Discussion

Summary:

7:40 pm Board will hold a working session with the MBTA Communities Working Group.

ATTACHMENTS:

Type	File Name	Description
Reference Material	07-18-2023_MBTA_Draft_MBTA_Communities_map.pdf	7/18 draft MBTA Communities map

MBTA COMMUNITIES

ZONING FOR MULTIFAMILY HOUSING IN ARLINGTON

DRAFT MAP

July 18, 2023

Draft MBTA Communities Subdistrict Concepts

Zoning Districts

Draft Mass Ave / Broadway Subdistrict

Draft Neighborhood Multifamily Subdistrict

Existing Context

Existing Commercial Zones

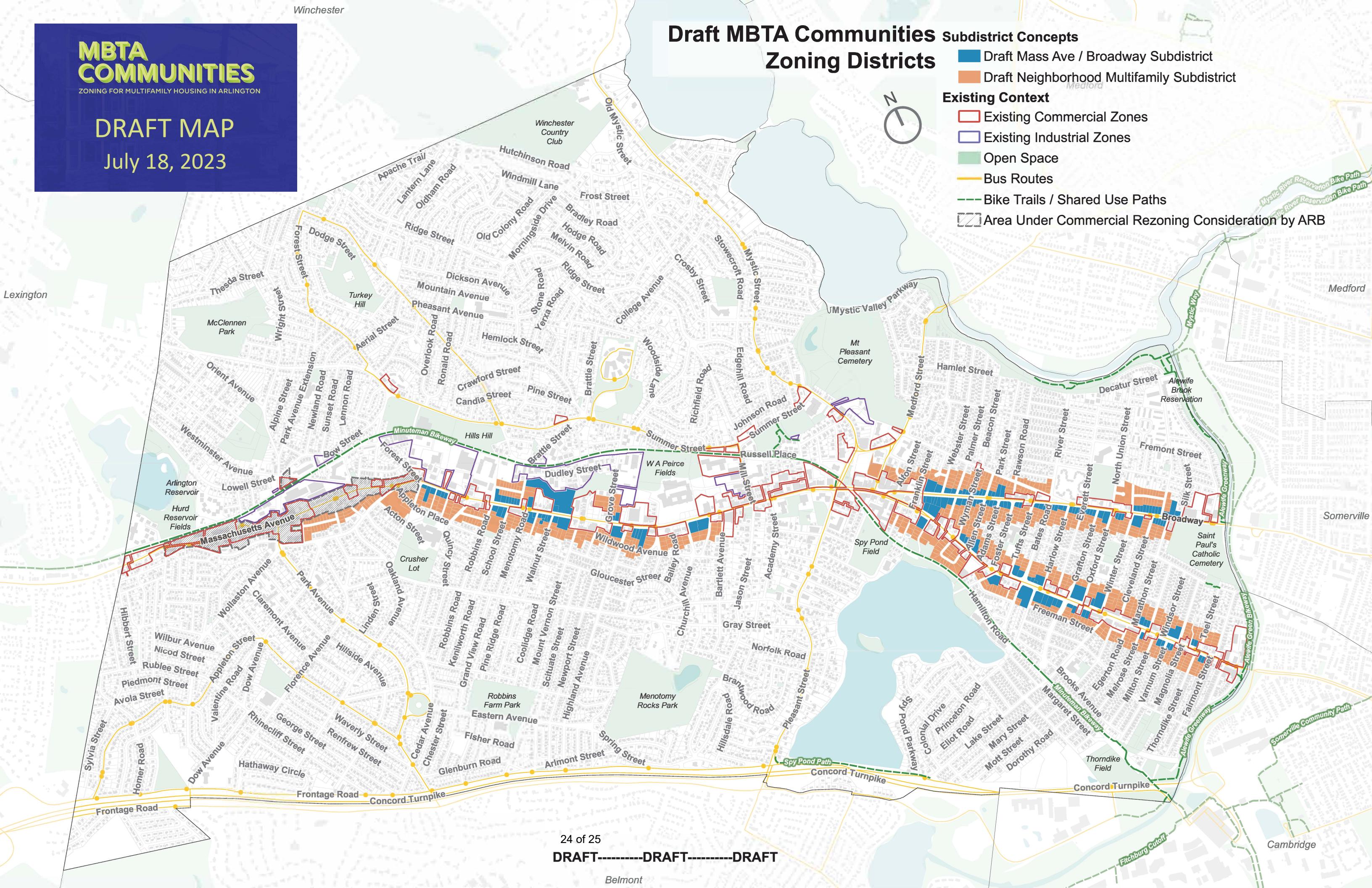
Existing Industrial Zones

Open Space

Bus Routes

Bike Trails / Shared Use Paths

Area Under Commercial Rezoning Consideration by ARB



Scenario 1- No Unit/Acre Max

■ Mass Ave/Broadway Dimensions:
 - No minimum parking requirement
 - Max 4 stories
 - 0' Front, 10' Sides, 20' Rear

■ Neighborhood Multifamily Dimensions:
 - No minimum parking requirement
 - Max 3 stories
 - 10' Front, 10' Sides, 20' Rear

NOTE: Dimensional standards noted here reflect only BY-RIGHT RESIDENTIAL minimum standards. The compliance model does NOT account for any optional bonuses that may be included in the final zoning bylaw.

Data Metric	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	Totals
District Name	Mass Ave/Broadway Subdistrict	Neighborhood Multifamily Subdistrict				
District Acreage	40.3	114.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	154.9
District Density Denominator	39.5	114.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	154.1
Final Unit Capacity per District	4,733	9,889	0	0	0	14,622
DU/AC	119.8	86.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	94.9

Scenario 2 - 50 Units/Acre Max

Data Metric	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	Totals
District Name	Mass Ave/Broadway Subdistrict	Neighborhood Multifamily Subdistrict				
District Acreage	40.3	114.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	154.9
District Density Denominator	39.5	114.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	154.1
Final Unit Capacity per District	1,766	4,900	0	0	0	6,666
DU/AC	44.7	42.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.3

Draft district concepts are tentatively compliant with Section 3A (Housing Choice Act) requirements, pending full review and determination of compliance by Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (formerly known as the Department of Housing and Community Development)